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Dear Leader,

As the State authorities gradually relax the restrictions on our regular activities, I am pleased to confirm that Scout Groups across NSW can return to outdoors face-to-face activities from Monday 1 June.

While it may be a while before we are meeting in our halls, and camping as before, we now have the opportunity to be outdoors again.

We have also started planning for a full return to face-to-face Scouting. We will provide Groups with guidelines to help them prepare to keep their members safe from infection while at Scouts.

As always, our priority is the health and wellbeing of our youth and adult members.

Your feedback is important

We sought feedback from Group Leaders, Leaders-in-Charge, and other volunteers who are responsible for large membership groups. They told us they would like to see a wide range of measures in place, before all face-to-face Scouting should resume.

In particular, the majority asked for guidelines about physical distancing, readily available hand sanitizer, no handshakes and strict limits on overnight activities. We are actively factoring these inputs into our plans.

They also told us that 90 per cent of Groups had stayed connected to their members during this difficult time, through online activities and online meetings. Over 75 per cent said their youth members were enjoying the online activities, or asking for more. That's impressive!

We know every Group will be different. Some may prefer to continue online Scouting, especially if it's working well, until they're ready to return to their Halls.

You know your Groups best. Make sure you ask all your Leaders for input, and check with your parents and youth members. Seeking others' views is important. After many years of experience, you will know that the loudest Scouting voices may not be representative.

Next steps

A checklist of minimum requirements that need to be met in order for face-to-face outdoors activities to resume is available on the [Scouts NSW Scouting Guide to Coronavirus webpage](#). In line with the official restrictions, there will be specified guidelines on how many people can participate.

We encourage Group Leaders and Rover Unit Leaders (or Leaders-in-charge) to review these requirements and consult how they can be implemented with their Section Leaders or Unit, as it's likely there will be unique circumstances for each Section, depending on their members and on their Group location. They should then complete and submit the [Self-Assessment Checklist for Formations Returning to Outdoor Activities](#), which is available on the same webpage.

In addition, Groups and Rover Units can start preparing to resume once restrictions are lifted by:

- Having hand sanitiser stations at entry and exit points in your Halls.
- Stocking bathrooms with hand wash, paper towels and bins.
- Measuring the dimensions of your Scout Hall to determine the maximum occupants based on the [1 person per 4 square metre rule](#).
- Displaying posters with instructions on how to help stop the spread of viruses. Refer to the [Scouts NSW Scouting Guide to Coronavirus webpage](#) for resources.
- Agreeing how you will accommodate additional and regular cleaning of items such as door handles and other high use surfaces. Refer to the [Cleaning Scout Properties Advice](#) for resources.
- Work out how you'll organise attendance records to manage contact tracing.
- Work out what you'll do if a confirmed case is reported from one of your volunteers or youth members.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge that for some of our members, this has been an incredibly challenging time. We know that some may have lost loved ones, while others are coping with illness or employment uncertainty. Let's keep that in our minds, and keep everything in perspective. Nothing is more important than the safety and wellbeing of our families and friends.

We must remain committed to investing in keeping everyone - especially our young people - safe at Scouts. This is fundamental to what we do and we will not compromise on this. But we must all be realistic and practical about our future. Our research shows that Scouts represents outstanding value for money for many families, helping young people to make lifelong friends and to gain skills to succeed in life. Importantly, Scouts helps our youth to be more resilient in times of difficulty, and later this week, I will share some valuable evidence about the contribution Scouts makes to our communities.

If we want Scouts to survive - and thrive - through the coming months, we need to capitalise on every ounce of our practical skills, creativity and tenacity to generate positive momentum. We know, from the soundings we've taken, that the majority of adult volunteers here want Scouts to keep going.

I feel the same.

You can find updated information via the [Scouts Guide to Coronavirus](#) page on the Scouts NSW website - it contains lots of helpful materials.

Yours in Scouting,

Neville Tomkins OAM JP
Chief Commissioner
Scouts Australia (NSW Branch)

To contact the Chief Commissioner, please email chief.commissioner@nsw.scouts.com.au.

Child Safety in Scouting

Scouts Australia NSW is committed to operating as a child safe organisation and implementing child safe policies and practices in accordance with the elements of a child safe institution outlined by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse report entitled Creating Child Safe Institutions.

Remember

All suspicions, concerns or allegations about criminal matters or child protection matters should be reported directly to the Chief Commissioner, the Deputy Chief Commissioner (Youth Safety, Compliance and Support), the CEO or the Child Protection Officer at the NSW State Office.

To make a report use the [online child protection form](#), call 02 9735 9000 or email childprotection@nsw.scouts.com.au.

Imminent Danger

If a young person is in imminent danger, the matter should be reported directly and immediately to NSW Police on 131 444.

Where a report is made to the police, you should also subsequently notify the NSW State Office.

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